THE LAST INVASION OF BRITAIN

In 1797 a French invasion force comprising a ragtag collection of some 1400 troops sailed from France in four warships. They were intent on landing in Bristol and rallying British peasants to rebel against the government, but adverse winds took them to Cardigan Bay, where they landed on a small sandy beach beneath Carregwasted Point, near the village of Llanwnda.

The French set up base on the beach, and spent two days looting the local countryside. Up on the cliffs above the beach, hundreds of local women and children, dressed in their traditional red tunics and tall black felt hats gathered to watch. The French mistook them for British redcoats and surrendered to a small band of local militia. This was the last instance of a foreign invasion force landing on the British mainland.

There is a memorial stone for the event at Carregwasted Point.

This is a transcription of a contemporary letter by an eye witness describing the event

Dear Sister

I write to you hoping that you are in good health as I am at present thanks be to God for it. The French invaded near Fishguard last Wednesday which put the Country in great confusion because they wear 14 hundred and the County gathered from all parts of Pembrokeshire near four hundred women in Red Flanes and Squier Cambell went to ask them were they to fight and they said they were and when they came near the French put down their arms and they was all took prisoners that time and are brought to Haverfordwest Friday night last… We had no more than four hundred men under arms and they thought the women Be a Ridgment of Soldiers.

Copy of a letter from John Mathias to his sister Mrs Mary Harry, who was in service at Swansea dated 27 February 1797

Carmarthen Record Office Cawdor papers 223/19, cited in The Last Invasion, Carradice,

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